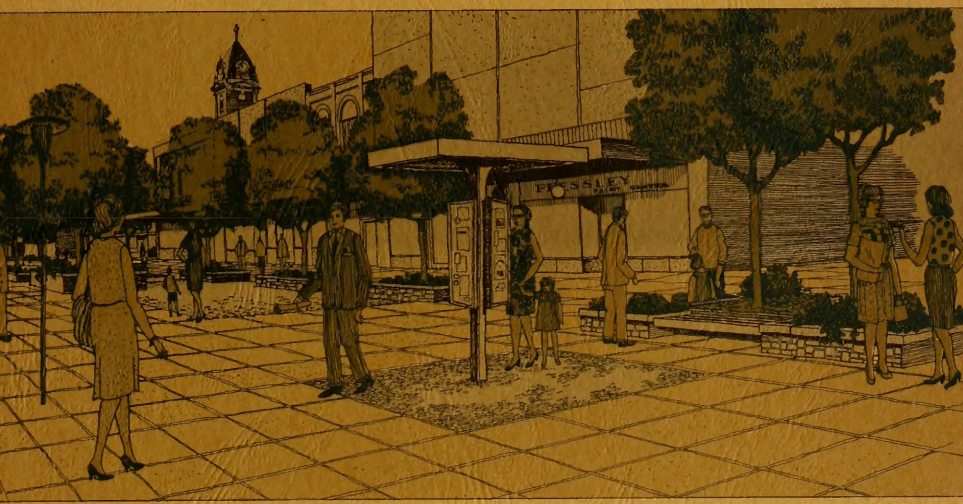


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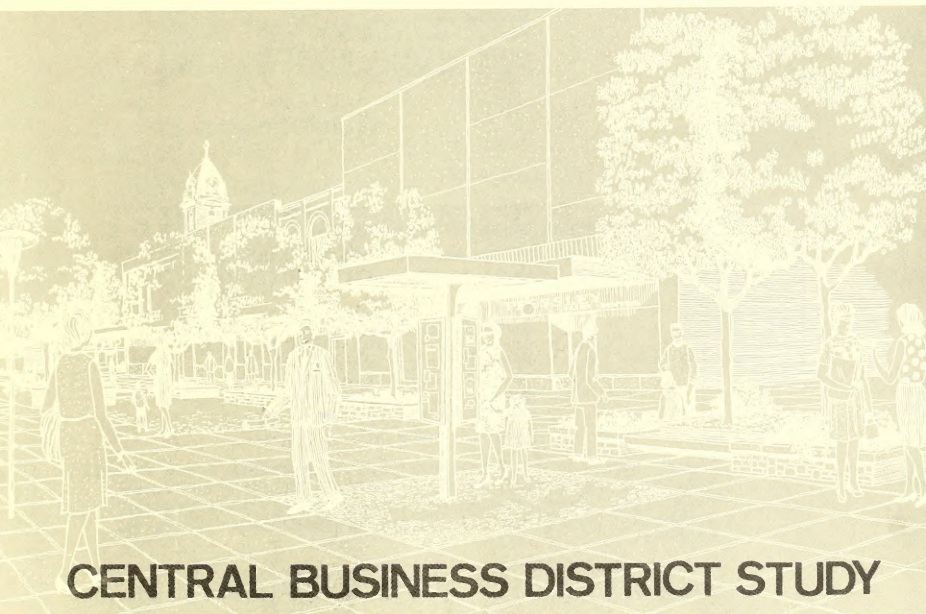
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MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY

MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY

PREPARED FOR:

THE CITY OF MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA

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J. E. Hinkel, City Manager

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June, 1967

Price \$1.00

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INTRODUCTION



I. I N T R O D U C T I O N

This report is one of a series of technical planning studies being prepared for the City of Monroe and its Planning Board as a part of a comprehensive city planning program. The other studies have been concerned with the development problems of the entire City, while this study deals with the problems of a more specific area - the downtown business district. This report is being developed in conjunction with the land development plan and thoroughfare plan for the entire City and has been formulated in conjunction with the Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, downtown merchants, North Carolina State Highway Commission, city officials and interested citizens.

The central business district of Monroe is the focal point for the economic, social, cultural, and civic activities of the City and County. The large majority of the retail businesses, offices, financial institutions, and governmental facilities of the county are located in this concentrated area. The tax base of the City and County is largely determined by the higher values in this downtown area. To a great extent the vitality of the County is dependent upon a healthy, vigorous downtown center in Monroe.

In Monroe, as in nearly every city and town across the nation, the problems of the central business district are a matter of growing concern to many people. Although Monroe has yet to have a major shopping center development, this possibility is very real in the eyes of many of the merchants. Many feel that a modern shopping center with its free abundant parking, and attractive new buildings with landscaping, would take much business and many customers away from the downtown area of Monroe.



One of the major problems of the central business district of Monroe is that it is a product of the past. Almost all of the buildings and facilities were built with little thought being given to automobile and truck traffic movement, pedestrian circulation or unified appearance. Today the central business district has become old with little attention, if any, being given to structural or functional revitalization.

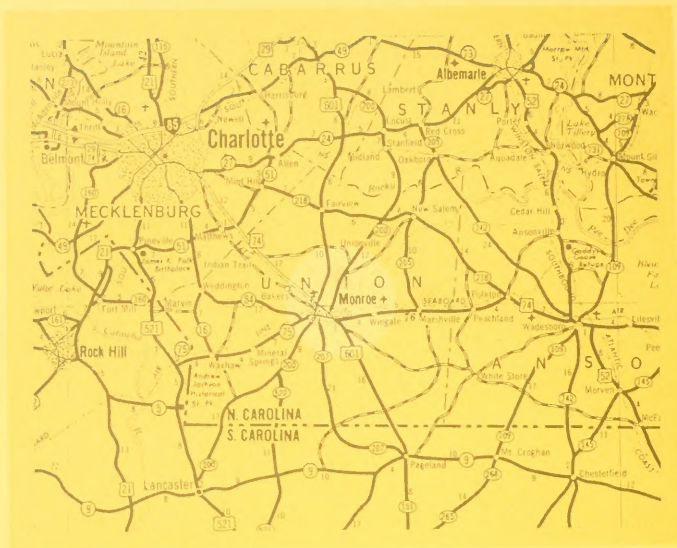
Monroe is at a point where many varied functions or activities are changing or being re-constructed in or near the downtown area. A new library has just been built, new city governmental facilities are needed, new county governmental facilities, including a new courthouse are needed, and there is a tremendous need for new parking facilities. Without proper planning and coordination all of these things will be constructed with no relationship to each other or to the existing functions in the area.

This study will delineate some of the specific problems of the central business district of Monroe and will recommend approaches and a preliminary plan to solve these problems in a comprehensive manner.

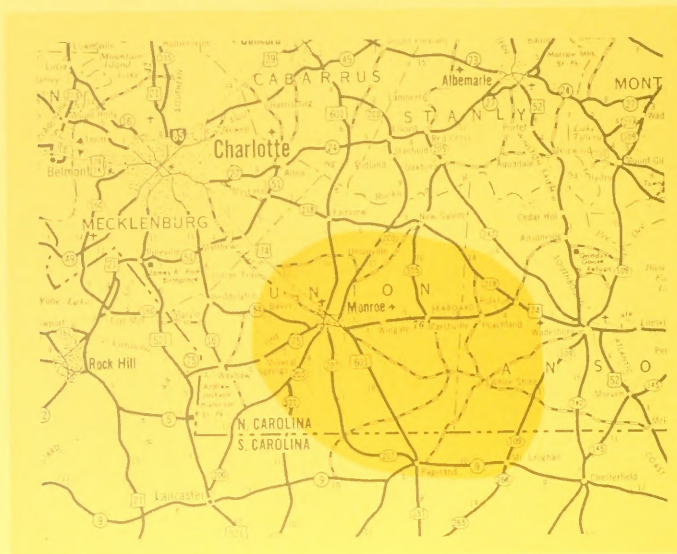




EXISTING CONDITIONS



REGIONAL SETTING



RETAIL TRADE

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

REGIONAL SETTING

Union County, with the City of Monroe as its nucleus, lies at the southern end of the Piedmont Crescent of North Carolina. Union County is bounded on the north by Mecklenburg, Cabarrus and Stanly counties, on the east by Anson County, on the south by South Carolina and on the west by South Carolina and Mecklenburg County.

RETAIL TRADE AREA

Downtown Monroe serves as a trading and service center not only for those persons residing within the City itself but from a much larger area.

This large area, indicated on the accompanying map, is referred to as the Monroe Retail Trade Area. It has been determined by the use of Reilly's Law of Retail Gravitation - a mathematical way of expressing the premise that people will trade in the larger urban place that is most accessible to them. As shown on the map the area encompasses the entire southeast section of Union County, the southwest corner of Anson County, and a northern portion of Chesterfield County in South Carolina.

The greatest factor affecting the size of Monroe's Retail Trade Area is the presence of Charlotte, twenty-seven miles northwest of Monroe. Other influences include both Rockingham and Wadesboro on the east, Albemarle on the north, Rock Hill, South Carolina, on the west, and a number of South Carolina cities on the south and southeast - Chester, Lancaster, Hartsville, Bennettsville, and even Columbia.

According to an estimate by the Division of Community Planning, there were approximately 41,900 persons residing in the Monroe Retail Trade Area in 1960. Ten thousand eight hundred and eighty-two of these lived within the city limits of Monroe.

POPULATION TRENDS BY DECADES

	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	Average Per Decade Change
Monroe	4,032	4,084	6,100	6,475	10,140	10,882	
% Change		+0.05	+49.4	+6.1	+56.6	+7.3	+23.9
Union County	33,277	36,029	40,979	39,097	42,034	44,670	
% Change		+8.3	+13.7	-4.6	+7.5	+6.3	+6.2
Monroe Township	9,520	10,956	13,707	14,127	15,203	18,334	
% Change		+15.1	+25.1	+3.1	+7.6	+20.6	+14.3

1959 INCOME	MONROE	REMAINDER OF MONROE TWP.	UNION COUNTY	URBAN N. C.	URBAN U. S.
PER CAPITA	\$1,418.00	\$1,041	\$1,088	\$1,639	\$2,069
MEDIAN FAMILY	\$4,514.00	3,969	3,837	4,843	6,166
MEAN FAMILY	\$5,329.00	4,482	4,395	5,913	7,248

MONROE RETAIL SALES	1954	1958	PERCENT Change	1963	PERCENT Change
No. of Establishments	198	169	-14.6	219	+29.6
Sales (\$000)	\$19,654	\$21,051	+ 7.1	\$35,273	+58.1
No. of Employees	818	817	- 0.1	866	+ 6.0

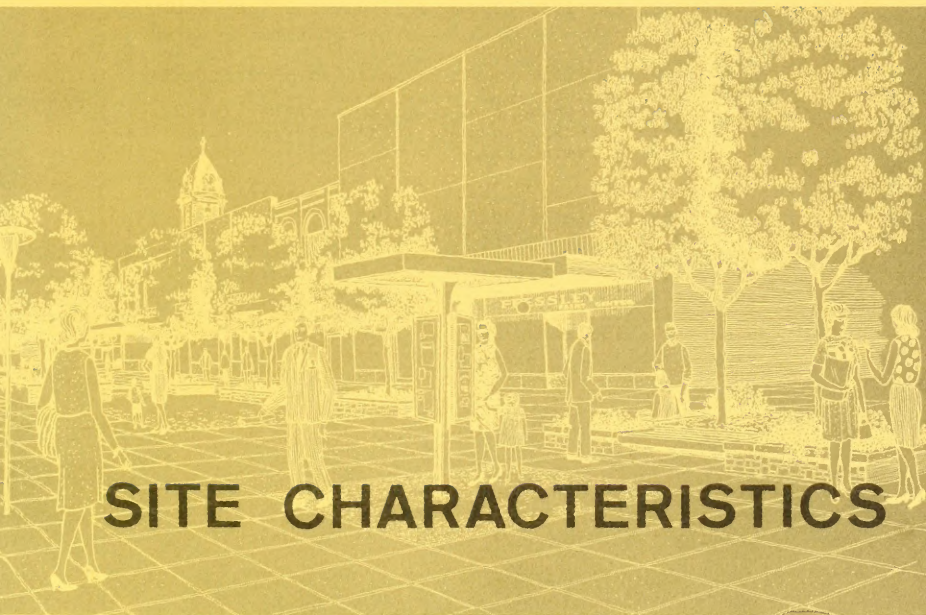
1963 MONROE RETAIL SALES (BY CATEGORY)

	\$000	Percent Of Total	Percent Of Total County Sales
Automobile	\$9,367	28.2	80.5
Misc. retail	7,422	22.3	82.5
Food Stores	6,265	18.8	57.9
Lumber, Bldg. Materials	2,904	8.7	71.2
General Merchandise Stores	2,025	6.1	70.2
Gasoline Service Stations	1,819	5.5	54.4
Apparel, accessory stores	1,307	3.9	84.3
Drug Stores	863	2.6	77.8
Furniture, home furnishings	787	2.4	68.4
Eating, drinking places	514	1.5	70.5
Total Retail Sales	\$33,272	100.0%	71.9%

EFFECTIVE BUYING POWER

In 1962 the estimated total personal income (estimate by the Division of Community Planning from North Carolina Department of Tax Research data) for persons residing in the Monroe Trade Area was \$72,058,300.00. In North Carolina in 1963 approximately 60.7 percent of total personal income was expended on retail sales. Applying this North Carolina standard to the Monroe Trade Area gives us a figure of \$43,739,400.00 available for expenditures in retail sales. This figure is in essence the effective buying power of the trade area.

In 1963 the actual amount expended for retail sales in Monroe was \$33,273,000.00. This is only 76.1 percent of the effective retail buying power of the Monroe trade area and means that Monroe is approximately \$10,466,000.00 shy of realizing this full potential.



SITE CHARACTERISTICS



English Co.



SITE CHARACTERISTICS

DELINEATED AREA

The central business district of Monroe as used in this study is defined as an area bounded by the railroad on the north, Houston Street on the south, Church Street on the east and Charlotte Street on the west. The central business district contains approximately forty-four blocks with a total area of approximately eighty-seven acres.

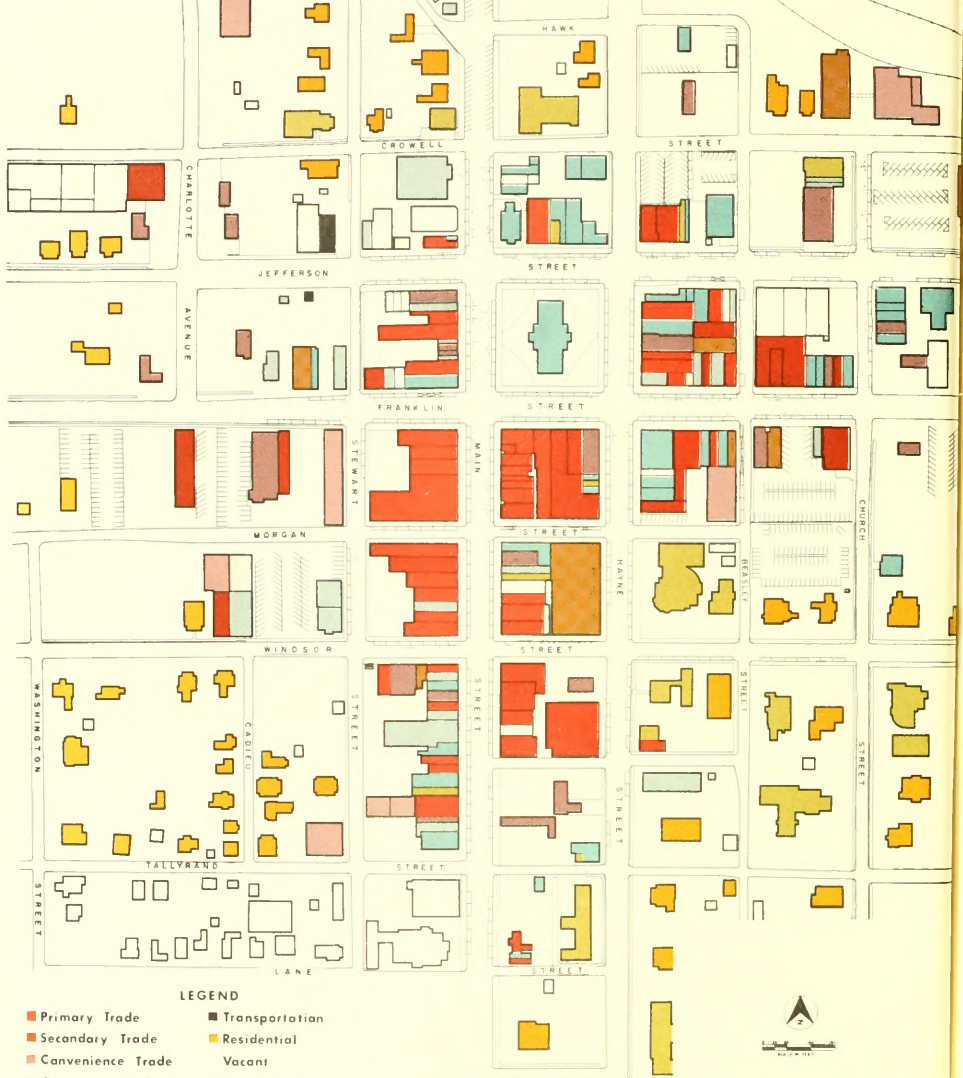
LAND FORM

The central business district of Monroe is situated on the crest of a north-south ridge with the Union County Courthouse located at the high point of the ridge approximately 600 feet above sea level. The land slopes down very rapidly to the north of the courthouse and west of Stewart Street. Main Street has a gentle slope from the courthouse to the south end of the street and the land east of Hayne Street slopes to the east.

BUILDING USE

The central business district of Monroe provides the primary functions of retail shopping, governmental services, offices, wholesale trade, storage facilities, and parking to persons shopping or doing business in Monroe. In general, the uses that form these different functions tend to locate together within specific areas of the central business district. This can be readily seen on the accompanying building use map which divides the different building uses up into detailed categories. These detailed categories are defined at the end of this section.

The primary retail trade activities of the Monroe central business district are concentrated along Main Street, from Jefferson Street to Windsor Street. There are a few primary retail establishments in the block directly east of the County Courthouse with most of the remainder located on Main Street south of Windsor Street. Mixed in with these primary trade activities are establishments classified as convenience trade and others classified as consumer services. Uses within both of these classifications are scattered throughout the core area and are located in conjunction with other related uses rather than grouped together.



MONROE, N.C.

Secondary trade activities, because they sell relatively expensive high bulk items, are generally located around the edge of the Main Street area. The majority of the block bounded by Windsor, Main, Hayne and Correll streets is occupied by secondary trade uses and a large number of secondary uses are located in the northeast section of the central business district area. These secondary activities, unlike other central business district activities are primarily auto oriented rather than pedestrian oriented. For this reason, many secondary uses are tending to leave the downtown area and locate on major streets where they are more accessible by automobiles.

Administrative, advisory and financial services are primarily located in the blocks immediately surrounding the Union County Courthouse.

Social and cultural activities seem to be grouped together in the southeast section of the central business district. These activities include four churches, the Health Center, the Old Hospital and a number of medical offices.

Wholesale and storage, as well as repair activities, are all scattered around the outskirts of the area. Manufacturing and industrial services are also located around the outskirts of the central business district, with one exception, the large manufacturing company located on the second story of the Monroe Hardware Company building on Hayne Street. Although this industry in the center of town creates some problems - parking, expansion, etc., it does bring a large number of persons right into the downtown area.

Transportation activities include the train station, bus station, railroad express and two taxi stands. Most of these activities are located at the north end of the central business district.

Residential structures surround the central business district on the southeast, south and east sides. A small number of residences are located on the north end of the area but most of these are substandard structures and are scheduled for removal.

The following table indicates the square feet of ground floor space for each use category. These figures are the result of a survey taken in March, 1965.

MONROE CBD - GROUND FLOOR SPACE

- Primary Retail	106,075 sq. ft.
- Secondary Retail	116,100 sq. ft.
- Convenience Trade	61,075 sq. ft.
- Consumer Services	71,575 sq. ft.
- Administrative, Financial and Advisory Services	90,750 sq. ft.
- Social and Cultural	92,550 sq. ft.
- Wholesale and Storage	43,050 sq. ft.
- Repair	12,200 sq. ft.
- Vacant	32,725 sq. ft.
- Industrial services and manufacturing	57,475 sq. ft.
- Transportation	8,425 sq. ft.
Total	693,000 sq. ft.

The detailed building use categories are defined as follows:

PRIMARY RETAIL - Primary retail shopping areas are generally located in the central business district or in the large regional shopping centers. These trade establishments sell low bulk comparison and specialty items. Primary retail establishments can be broken down into two categories: 1) stores which generate their own trade such as department stores and variety stores and 2) apparel shops, shoe stores, jewelry stores, and similar establishments which are economically dependent upon the pedestrian traffic generators -- department stores and variety stores -- for supplying potential customers.

SECONDARY RETAIL - Secondary retail establishments usually sell "high bulk" items such as furniture, appliances, home furnishings, automobiles, farm equipment, hardware, lumber, building materials and similar goods. Merchandise in secondary trade establishments is relatively expensive and seldom purchased by the individual customer. Due to the expensive cost of secondary trade goods, the customer is generally willing to travel longer distances to compare merchandise between widely separated competing establishments. As a result, secondary retail establishments do not have to locate in close proximity to each other; instead, they often locate at independent locations along major streets or highways. In many instances, these establishments locate in areas which adjoin the central business district.

CONVENIENCE RETAIL - Convenience retail establishments merchandise goods commonly referred to as "convenience goods." They sell merchandise such as food, drugs, and gasoline which are purchased frequently. Establishments selling these goods generally serve a smaller market area than do either primary trade or secondary trade establishments. They are frequently located in outlying neighborhood shopping areas in order to be as near as possible to their customers. Food stores and gasoline stations generally do not prosper in the intensively developed core of the central business district since they require locations with convenient access.

ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL, AND ADVISORY SERVICES - Administrative, financial, and advisory services include offices or establishments performing either the management or administrative duties of government, business, and welfare agencies or providing monetary and professional services for the community. These include doctors' offices, lawyers' offices, accountants' offices, banks, the city hall, the post office and similar uses.

CONSUMER SERVICES - Consumer services include establishments providing services to the person. Establishments such as restaurants, barber shops, theaters, pool halls, hotels, newspaper offices, telephone offices, and similar uses are included.

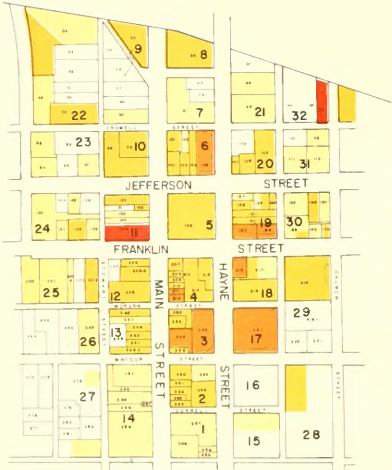
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES - Cultural and social services in the central business district include churches, libraries, and similar uses.

INDUSTRIAL SERVICES AND MANUFACTURING - Industrial service and manufacturing activities include all establishments engaged in manufacturing processes and all related industrial services.

WHOLESALE TRADE, REPAIR SERVICES, STORAGE - This category includes all wholesale activities, mechanical repair services and enclosed storage.

TRANSPORTATION - Transportation establishments provide for the conveyance of passengers and freight from place to place.

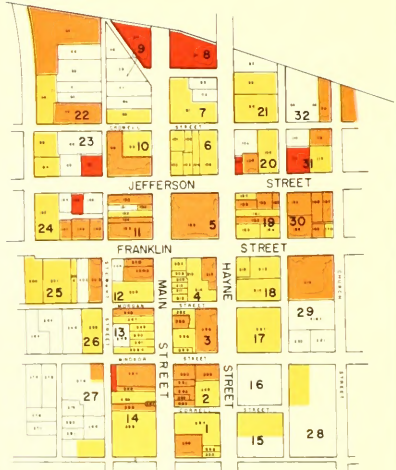
VACANT FLOOR SPACE - The vacant floor space category includes all buildings or portions of buildings which were not being devoted to any use. Floor space being used only on a part time basis was considered as occupied floor space. All storage space, either passive or active, was considered as occupied floor space.



MONROE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



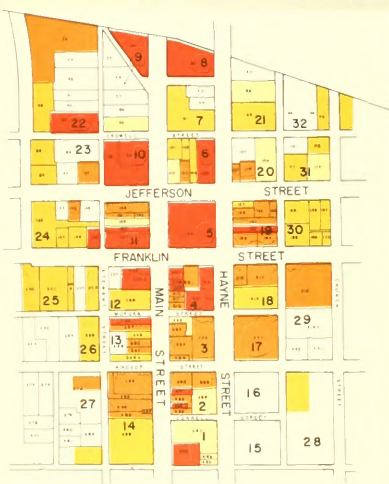
- BUILDING HEIGHT**
- One Story
 - Two Stories
 - Three Stories
 - Four Stories & Over



MONROE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



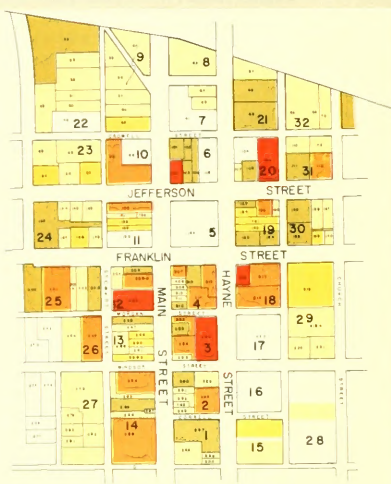
- STRUCTURAL CONDITION**
- Good
 - Fair
 - Poor



MONROE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



- AGE OF BUILDINGS**
- Under 10 years
 - 10 - 20 years
 - 21 - 49 years
 - 50 years & over



MONROE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



- TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE**
- 0 - \$10,000
 - \$10,000 - \$15,000
 - \$15,000 - \$25,000
 - \$25,000 - \$50,000
 - Over \$50,000

The maps on the opposite page indicate four general characteristics of buildings in the downtown area of Monroe. The height of structures, the condition of structures, the age of structures, and the combined value of land and structures. As indicated on the map showing height of structures, two story structures predominate in the area, with most of the structures along Main Street being at least two stories high. Structures with three stories are scattered throughout the area and the hotel is the only major structure with more than three stories.

The building condition map indicates all buildings in three categories: good, fair, and poor. Approximately 50 percent of the structures shown are in good condition with the other 50 percent in fair condition. There were only a very few structures in poor condition. (This survey did not take in the residential structures.)

As can be seen on the map showing the age of structures, approximately one-third of the buildings in the area are over fifty years old. Another one-third are between twenty-one and forty-nine years old. This leaves only one-third of the buildings under twenty years old, and a very small number of these are indicated as under ten years old.

The map showing total assessed value indicates the values of the land plus the value of the structure. As indicated on the map, the highest value land is along Main Street and those blocks surrounding the County Courthouse.



GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEX

One of the major functions of the Monroe Central Business District is that of government. City, County, and State offices located in the business district provide governmental services to the people within Monroe and Union County.

The accompanying map indicates the location of governmental buildings within the central business district area. The Union County Courthouse Square forms the center of governmental activity, with city hall, the post office, other offices and financial institutions located near by. Other governmental offices are located in scattered locations throughout Monroe. It is apparent from a look at the map that no plan has been followed in the location of governmental functions.

Many of the governmental buildings are old and should be replaced by an up to date facility. The city hall and fire station were built around 1862 and the Union County Courthouse was constructed in 1886. Although these buildings presently fulfill their functions, they do so in an obsolete and inefficient manner. They are expensive to operate and maintain.

In addition to the many existing inadequacies, the reorganization of the county court system makes the present facilities almost impossible to use under the new system.

When the population of an area increases, the overall needs of the people increase and the volume of services provided by government will increase. In order to provide these increased needs governments must expand existing services and must offer new or additional services. As a result, they will employ more personnel and need more building space.

In this section the total full-time government employment of Monroe and Union County will be compared with that of other North Carolina cities and counties at different population levels.

CITY GOVERNMENTS

CITY	MONROE	NEW BERN	HICKORY	KINSTON
POPULATION	10,882	15,717	19,328	24,819

DISTRIBUTION OF FULL-TIME GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT BY DEPARTMENTS

ADMINISTRATION	9	7	13	14
POLICE	22	31	45	47
FIRE	13	16	41	42
ENGINEERING	1	4	7	5
PUBLIC UTILITIES	24	42	29	80
PUBLIC WORKS	29	57	67	77
TREATMENT PLANTS	6	5	20	--
MISCELLANEOUS	6	6	3	--
TOTAL	<u>110</u>	<u>168</u>	<u>225</u>	<u>265</u>

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

COUNTY	UNION COUNTY	CALDWELL COUNTY	LENOIR COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY
POPULATION	44,670	49,552	55,276	68,137

DISTRIBUTION OF FULL-TIME GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT BY FUNCTIONS

EDUCATION	426	686	640	749
HIGHWAYS	17	19	23	24
HEALTH AND HOSPITALS	265	--	15	472
POLICE PROTECTION	30	34	59	84
FIRE PROTECTION	13	23	52	22
FINANCIAL ADM.	21	15	34	8
GENERAL CONTROL	10	3	25	29
WATER SUPPLY	21	15	28	34
OTHER LOCAL UTILITIES	16	4	32	29
ALL OTHER FUNCTIONS	106	122	188	106
TOTAL	<u>927</u>	<u>921</u>	<u>1,095</u>	<u>1,555</u>

City Hall

The comparisons on the opposite page of city and county government employment have been taken from the 1962 Census of Governments, Compendium of Public Employment, published by the U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Only those functions other than education were compared, and all figures represented the number of full-time employees in each function.

During the summer of 1965 a survey of persons visiting city and county offices was made to determine the relationships of the various offices to public visits. Two different days were selected for the survey - an average day or ordinary work day and a day upon which utility bills were due.

On both days the largest number of persons visited the collection department. On days when utility bills were due a large number visited the billing department. The other important offices as far as public visits are concerned are the Mayor and City Manager's office, and the gas department. The police and fire department were not considered in this survey since it only covered the municipal building.

From the standpoint of the relationship to other governmental offices, the city manager's office is visited by representatives of all departments at least once each day.

SURVEY OF PERSONS VISITING CITY HALL

	<u>July 2, 1965</u>	<u>July 16, 1965</u>
Persons who visited city hall	99	297
Persons who visited two offices	11	28
Persons who visited three or more offices	3	3
Persons visiting collection department	64	276
Persons visiting gas department	16	10
Persons visiting city manager	12	4
Persons visiting city clerk	8	4
Persons visiting electrical department	7	1
Persons visiting sanitation department	4	1
Persons visiting city engineer	2	8
Persons visiting billing department	0	22
Persons visiting water department	0	2

SURVEY OF PERSONS VISITING COURTHOUSE

	<u>July 2, 1965</u>	<u>July 19, 1965</u>
Persons who visited courthouse	185	208
Persons who visited more than one office in courthouse	22	21
Persons who visited lawyers office before visiting courthouse	15	-
Persons visiting courtroom	42	52
Persons visiting clerk superior court	40	53
Persons visiting register of deeds	38	53
Persons visiting tax collector	24	24
Persons visiting county commissioners	11	-
Persons visiting sheriff	11	12
Persons visiting N. C. Dept. of Revenue	10	7
Persons visiting Judges Quarters	5	1
Persons visiting county manager	5	4
Persons visiting tax supervisor	3	1
Persons visiting county accountant	2	4
Persons visiting probation officers	2	3
Persons visiting Board of Elections	1	3

County Courthouse

The four most frequented places are the courtroom, clerk of superior court, register of deeds and tax collector, indicating the need for these offices to be readily accessible to the public. The other most frequented offices were the county commissioners, sheriff's, county manager's and North Carolina Department of Revenue. Naturally, visitation to some offices is much heavier on specific days such as after tax notices have been sent out, or when the county commissioners may be considering some significant public problem.

Government offices whether city, county or state should be readily accessible to the persons they serve. They should be located conveniently for those persons who must visit them daily, weekly or occasionally. These surveys have indicated which offices are most heavily visited by the public and point out that in any planning for new buildings due consideration should be given to their location.

Additional information concerning the planning of future governmental facilities for the City of Monroe and Union County can be found in the report entitled Facilities Space Utilization Study and Implementation Plan for Union County, Monroe, N. C. by Henningson, Durham and Richardson, Architects, Planners, Engineers, Charlotte, N. C.

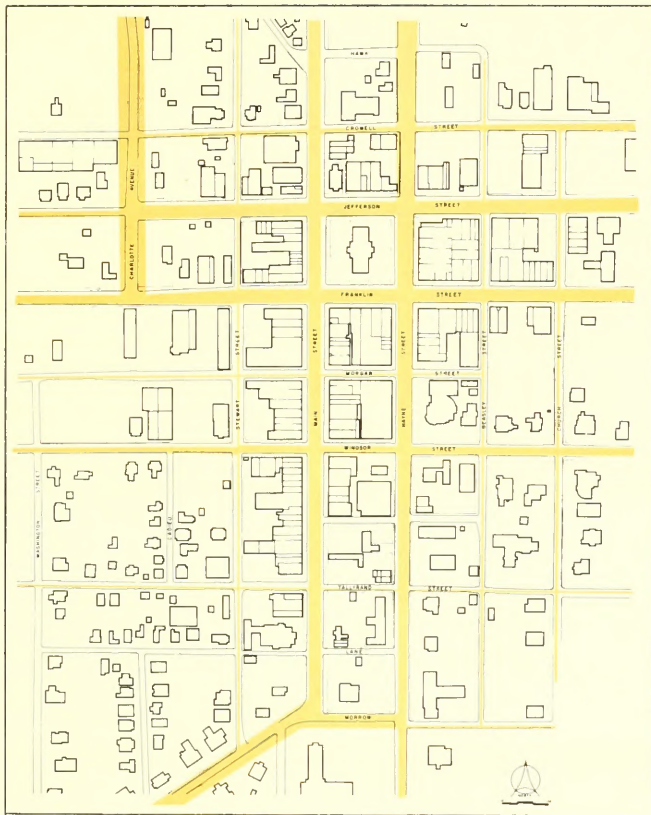


TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

At the present time Downtown Monroe is served by a grid street system which criss-crosses the area. Charlotte, Hayne and Franklin Streets carry the largest amounts of traffic within the grid while other narrow streets carry smaller volumes of traffic.

More detailed information on the present and future traffic circulation in Downtown Monroe can be found in the report entitled Downtown Monroe, N. C., Traffic and Parking Study by the Division of Community Planning.





EXISTING C. B. D. CIRCULATION SYSTEM





OFF STREET PARKING

- PUBLIC
- PUBLIC FOR SPECIFIC USE
- PRIVATE

ON STREET PARKING

- METERED LONG TERM
- METERED SHORT TERM
- UNMETERED



MONROE, N.C

PARKING

Parking in Downtown Monroe is provided either by spaces along the curb in the streets or by off-street lots. At the time of the parking survey in March 1965, there were 2,071 spaces provided in the downtown area. These spaces are shown on the accompanying map and consist of the following:

Off-street		On-street	
Public	316	2 hr. metered	290
Public for specific use	787	12 min. metered	56
Private	486	Unmetered	136
Total	<u>1,589</u>	Total	<u>482</u>

More detailed information on parking can be found in the report entitled Downtown Monroe, N. C., Traffic and Parking Study.







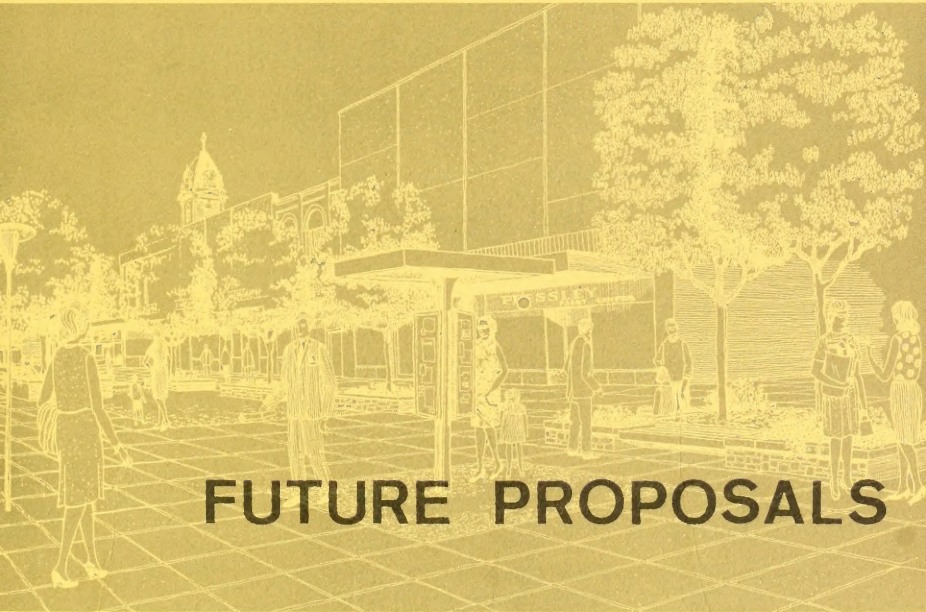
APPEARANCE

With a few minor exceptions the visual appearance of the central business district of Monroe leaves a lot to be desired. The presence of the Union County courthouse and surrounding square with the stately trees adds immeasurably to the appearance of the area as do a number of the newer financial institutions, churches and some of the older residential structures. Other than the aforementioned, we are left with an overabundance of overhead wiring, power poles, unrelated store fronts, poorly designed signs and a lack of trees and landscaping, all of which detract from the visual environment of the entire area. Building facades, canopies and signs compete with each other and the materials, colors, design, and letters of which they are composed are so varied that any overall effect is nullified.

There are many very unsightly areas to the rear of stores, with trash and litter scattered about. Many of the parking areas in these "rear areas" are unorganized and unpaved.

All things considered, there have been very few attempts (other than individual store improvements) to improve the appearance of the downtown area.





FUTURE PROPOSALS

III. FUTURE PROPOSALS

The first section of this report has dealt with the manner in which Monroe's central business district is presently developed. All of the different existing conditions and characteristics of the central business district area have been examined, analyzed, and evaluated.

Just as in the past, the future will bring a great number of changes to the business district. The city, merchants, property owners and citizens can let these changes accumulate and future problems be solved in a random, disorganized manner, or they can make plans for the changes.

The City of Monroe, through the Monroe Planning Board is taking the first step in planning for these future changes by the preparation of this preliminary design plan for 1985. This preliminary plan is based upon estimates of additional space which will be needed by 1985 for the expansion of existing businesses and the creation of new businesses, the development of parking spaces to serve potential customers and the provision of an efficient automobile and pedestrian circulation system.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The amounts of space that will actually be used by the various functions in the Monroe central business district over the next twenty years will depend upon many variables. These include:

- 1) The population growth within the Monroe Retail Trade Area,
- 2) The expendable income of persons within the Monroe Retail Trade Area,
- 3) Changes in existing shopping habits and tastes,
- 4) Changes in merchandising methods,
- 5) Changes in transportation methods,
- 6) Modernization and redevelopment of the entire central business district.

For general planning purposes, however, the future building space requirements for downtown Monroe were estimated by assuming that a proportionate relationship exists between the size of the trade area population and the physical size of the business district.

FUTURE TRADE AREA POPULATION PROJECTIONS

1960	41,900
1965	44,833
1975	51,110
1985	54,453

These projections are based on the assumption that the trade area population is going to increase at the same proportion as that of Union County. There was a 1.4 percent per year population increase in Union County between 1960 and the special 1966 census. The projection is further enforced by the general growth of Monroe township which increased at an average rate of 1.4 percent per year between 1910 and 1960.

From the above population growth projection the future Monroe central business district floor space requirement is computed:

FUTURE MONROE CBD FLOOR SPACE REQUIREMENTS

(does not include - industrial, wholesale, and storage and repair uses)

1965 - 546,630 sq. ft.

1975 - 623,158 sq. ft. (1.4% annual increase)

1985 - 710,400 sq. ft. (1.4% annual increase)

FUTURE TRAFFIC AND PARKING REQUIREMENTS

In 1954 there were 14,613 motor vehicles registered within Union County. In 1964 there were 19,625 vehicles, an increase of 34.3 percent. At the same rate of increase, there will be 26,356 vehicles in 1985. If we have crowded streets and parking areas today, what will they be like in 1985, unless something is done about them? Many feel that something must be done to take care of these tremendous needs (both present and future) if the downtown area is to survive.

In the report on Downtown Parking and Traffic, it was estimated that there was a demand at the present time for 2,078 public parking spaces. Projecting parking space demands at the same rate of increase as the trade area population results in the following:

	Parking spaces
1966 - Total public parking need	2,078
1966 - Total public parking provided	<u>1,585</u>
1966 Deficiency	493
1975 - Total Public Parking Need	2,339
1985 - Total Public Parking Need	2,666

It should be noted that of the 1,585 public parking spaces provided at the present, 482 are on-street spaces. It is anticipated that at some point in the future many of these spaces will have to be removed, due to the mall proposals and the increased traffic loads on the major streets.

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Before explaining the preliminary plan for Monroe, it is desirable to list the objectives which have been taken into consideration in preparing the plan. The objectives are summarized as follows:

- 1) To create a dynamic downtown which would act as the regional center for all of Monroe and Union County business, governmental, and civic activities by encouraging a wide variety of functions,
- 2) To create an efficient automobile circulation system to and around this downtown area,
- 3) To provide adequate parking facilities conveniently located to the major areas of activities,
- 4) To create an efficient pedestrian circulation system by which persons will be able to walk conveniently from parking to shopping without danger from vehicular traffic,
- 5) To provide additional building space sufficient for future expansion,
- 6) To accomplish these objectives in such a manner that an attractive and pleasant central business district will be created which will attract people to shop in the area.

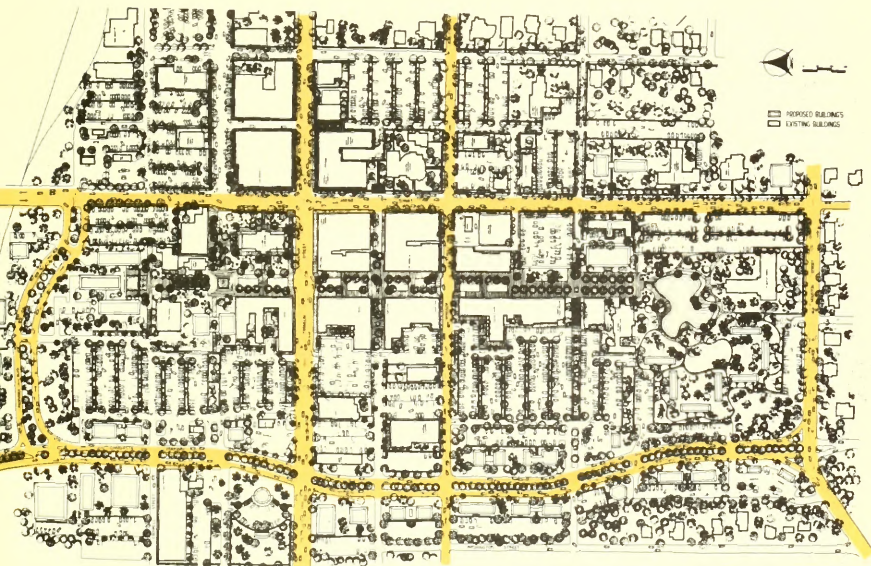
PRELIMINARY PLAN

The previous section of this report has been concerned with statistical or quantitative requirements for the downtown of the future. The design of the Preliminary Plan must take these statistical requirements and create a new atmosphere based on the major function of the downtown area. The design should result in a planned downtown area which is more efficient and more beautiful than the present area.

CIRCULATION

AUTOMOBILE CIRCULATION

The accompanying map indicates the proposed major automobile circulation in the downtown area. Traffic coming into the downtown area is routed along a proposed central business district loop consisting of Charlotte, Houston, Hayne Streets and a new boulevard parallel to the railroad tracks. More detailed information on automobile circulation can be found in the Traffic and Parking Study of the Monroe central business district.



AUTO CIRCULATION MAP

SERVICE CIRCULATION

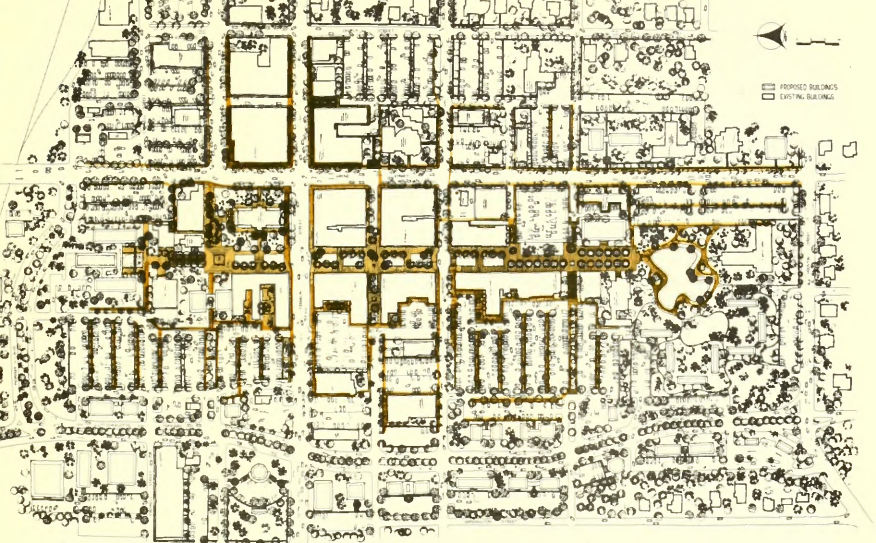
In the preliminary design plan it is proposed that trucks bringing shipments to downtown stores use the central business district loop as the major circulation system and enter service roads or collector points close to their destination. Because of the general nature of the design plan, the detailed service requirements of each store are not considered, but the proposed general principle is for truck service to the rear of stores with a minimum amount of automobile and pedestrian conflict. In the areas of the plan where shops are "double fronted" and have rear shopper entrances, it might be desirable or even necessary to limit the hours when service vehicles are allowed to early morning and evening time. This would help eliminate the conflict between the shopper and the service vehicles.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

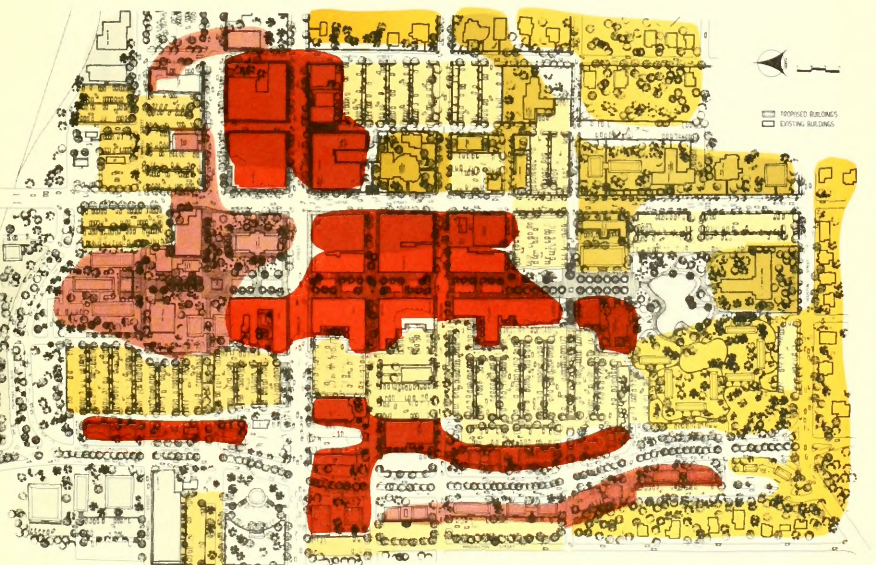
The major pedestrian ways shown on the Design Plan lead from the parking areas to the stores where the various shopping activities take place. It is the intent of the plan that the pedestrian ways be much more than concrete walks leading around the trash cans and service areas. The general pedestrian circulation system should become a major asset to the entire downtown area. The walkways could be properly landscaped with attractive paving materials, trees, shrubs, and flowers. Various features could be developed as a part of the walkways - benches, lighting, reflecting pools, fountains and even comfort stations and play areas for children.

FUNCTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

A study of the existing building use map shown in a previous chapter reveals that uses of a similar nature tend to group together into what might be termed functional areas. These functional areas form the framework around which the downtown of the future will be built. The accompanying map indicates the proposed arrangement of these functional areas as envisioned for 1985.



PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION MAP



FUNCTIONAL ARRANGEMENT MAP

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary type trade activity Secondary type trade activity Governmental center & offices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social & cultural Parking Wholesale & industrial Residential |
|--|---|

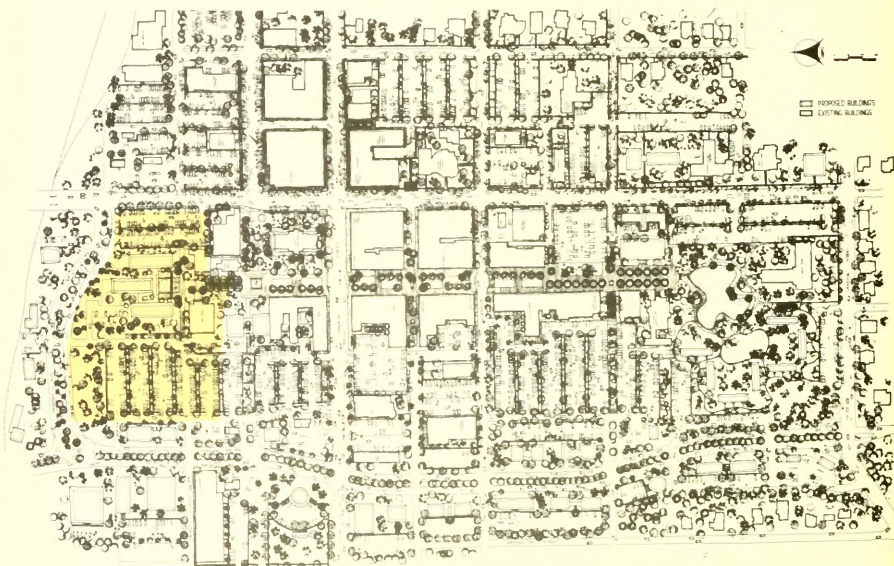


To meet the square footage requirements discussed in an earlier chapter, it is not anticipated that all additional new space will be provided by new construction. To a great extent much of the expansion of the central area will take place by uses changing places, by uses moving away and being replaced with other uses more appropriate for the area. For example a furniture store would not necessarily be best located on the proposed Main Street Mall, but could function better related to automobile traffic. In a case such as this it is anticipated that in the long run many uses would relocate with each structure eventually put to its best use.

FEATURES OF THE PLAN

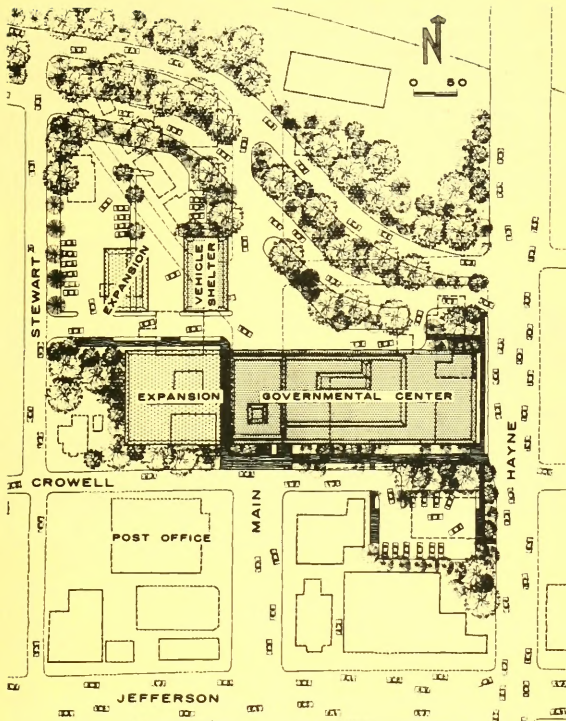
GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEX

One of the major considerations of the proposed plan is the provision of an area for expanding city and county governmental functions. This governmental center complex as envisioned would be located north of the post office at the end of Main Street. Much of this area is presently occupied by run down or slum buildings scheduled for removal in an urban renewal project.



GOVERNMENTAL CENTER PLAN

GOVERNMENTAL CENTER, SITE PLAN

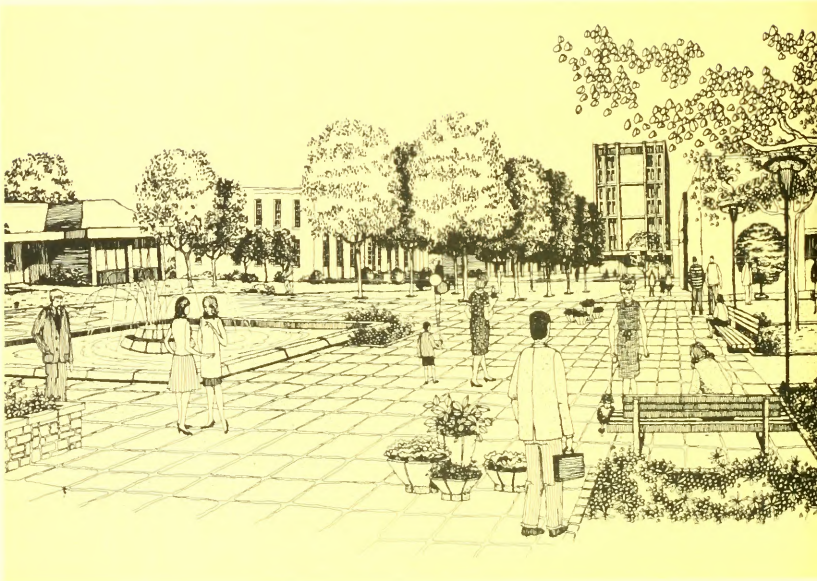


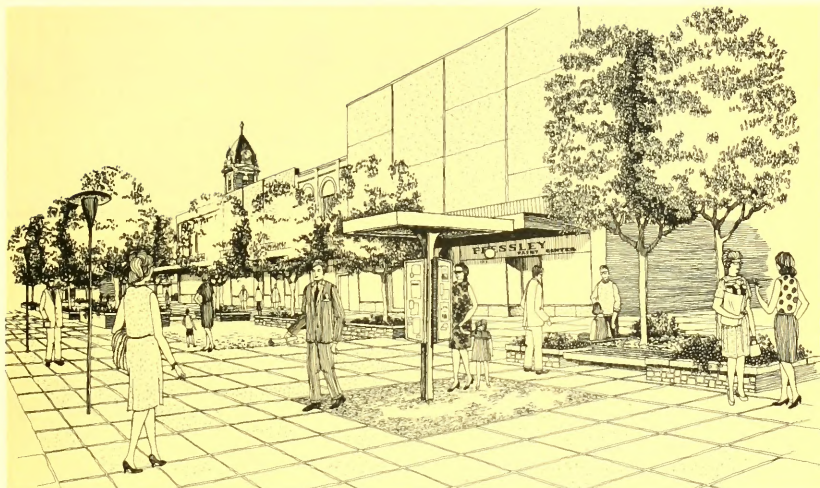
This governmental complex would form the nucleus of a superblock bounded by Hayne Street, Franklin Street, Charlotte Street, and a new boulevard parallel to the railroad tracks.

The plan calls for the construction of one large building to house both city and county facilities. The present city hall and court house structures would be retained, but would be used for community purposes rather than as offices. The city hall building could be restored to its original condition and saved as a historic monument. It could possibly house the art society or some civic use. The county courthouse could be used as a downtown cultural center and actually have a large number of uses.

THE NORTH END OF MAIN STREET

The north end of Main Street is shown as it might appear as a future governmental complex. The tall building at the end of the street would be the new city-county building. The mall or courtyard shown in front of the building (presently occupied by Main Street) would tie the new area closer to the existing courthouse square and to the main shopping area. This mall area as envisioned would include trees, fountains, sitting areas, lighting, etc., and would be entirely pedestrian oriented.



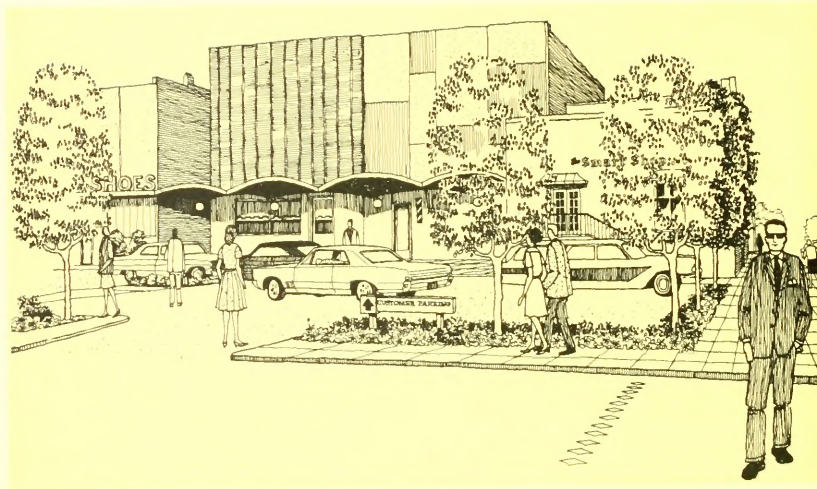


MAIN STREET MALL

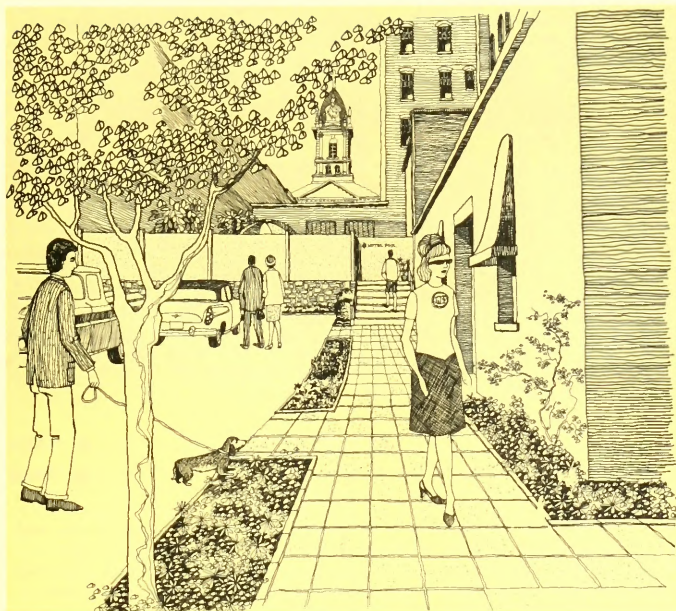
Main Street mall would be an extension of the governmental complex into the shopping area. Automobile traffic would be removed from the street and the right-of-way developed for pedestrian use. This tree-lined mall is proposed for the entire length of Main Street from the proposed city-county building on the north to the Baptist Church on the south. Planters, seats, pools, fountains and sculpture would be included as design elements, and the mall would be extensively landscaped to provide a delightful atmosphere for shoppers to shop, relax and enjoy themselves.

REAR STORE ENTRANCES AND PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS

Another major proposal of the plan is that many of the commercial structures fronting on Main Street would provide an additional "front" on the back of the structure. This "front" on the back would face the parking areas and would provide entrances to the mall area through the stores.



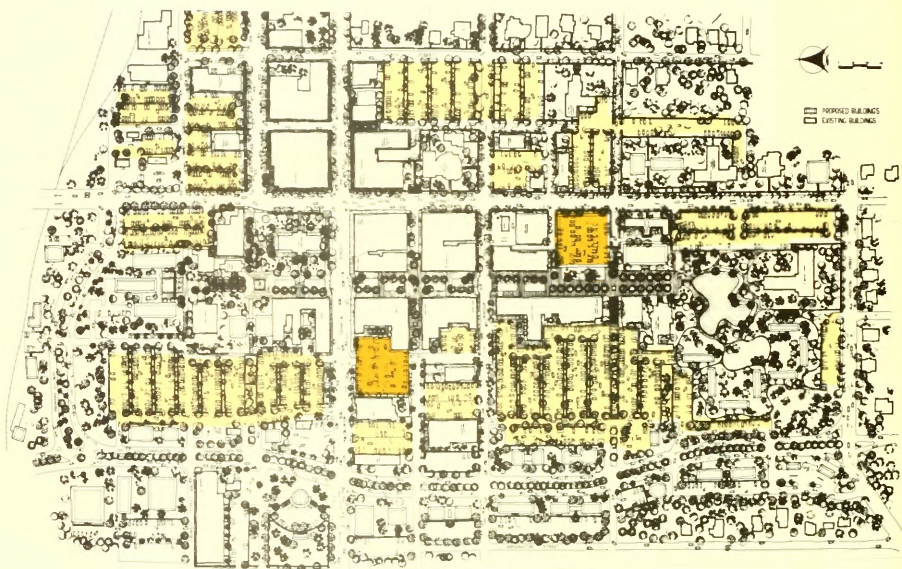
Pedestrian walkways would replace trash scattered alleys along the backs of the buildings. All overhead wiring would be removed and placed underground, and trash containers would be centralized and hidden from view. Tree plantings and general landscaping would create a pleasant shopping atmosphere.



PARKING LOTS AND DECKS

The provision of adequate public off-street parking spaces was one of the major considerations of the plan. The plan as envisioned would include a number of large off-street parking lots and two parking decks, all located with major entrances from the loop circulation system around the downtown area. It is important that all the lots and the decks be not only easily accessible but be directly related to the major shopping area.

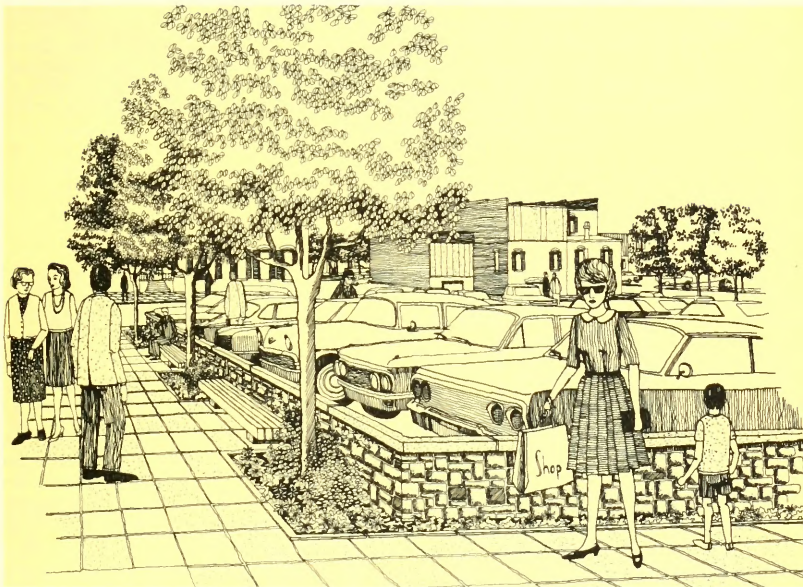
The proposed plan indicates 2,766 parking spaces. 368 of these are provided in the two decks. (Decks would be constructed at a time when the parking demand cannot be met with surface parking.)



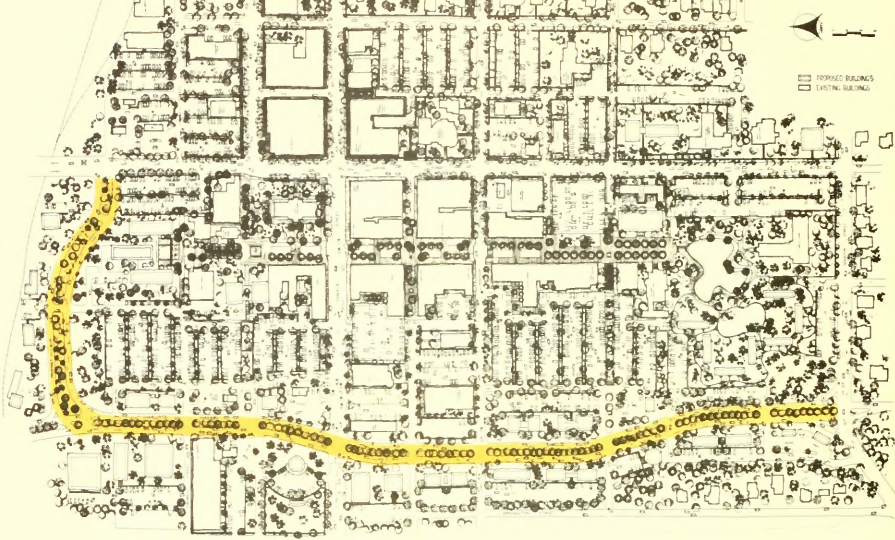
PARKING MAP

- PARKING DECKS
- PARKING LOTS

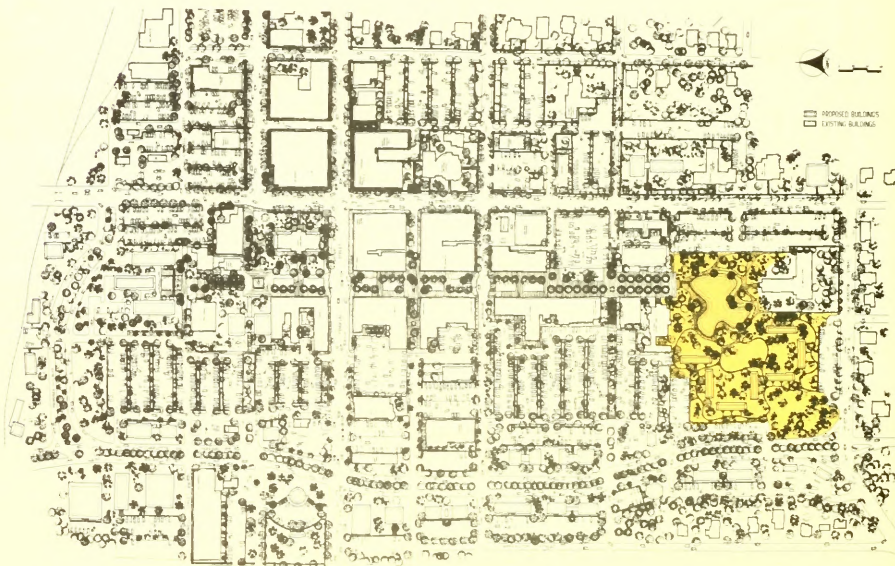
All parking areas provided would be organized and well planned. They should be paved and landscaped with shade trees. A parking lot need not be a barren sea of asphalt, but can be an attractive as well as functional addition to Downtown Monroe.



Pedestrian ways would lead from the off-street parking lots to the main shopping area. These walks would be paved and attractively landscaped. Many of the pedestrian walkways would serve a dual purpose as service areas for trucks and delivery vehicles during the night and early morning hours when not in use for pedestrian circulation. Underground wiring and centralized garbage containers would be incorporated into the improvements.



BOULEVARD TYPE THOROUGHFARES



DOWNTOWN PARK AREA

BOULEVARD TYPE THOROUGHFARES

Where thoroughfares are proposed in new locations, it is suggested that adequate right-of-way be obtained to provide for median strips with tree plantings. These boulevards would enhance the entrances into downtown and appear as more than strips of wide pavement cutting through the area.

DOWNTOWN PARK AREA

A downtown park is planned at the south end of Main Street in front of the First Baptist Church. This park, along with the Church, would form the southern terminus of Main Street mall. One of the main features of this park would be the informal lake located in the center of the park. In general the park would be very informal with walks meandering through. Clustered around the west side of the park would be a group of downtown apartments. Persons could live here, right in the downtown area, and walk to work.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

TREE PLANTINGS

A tree planting program should be considered for downtown Monroe. The trees located on the Courthouse Square add much to the downtown area but are only a beginning. Trees should be planted in all areas of downtown Monroe. Trees improve the appearance of our streets by lessening the monotony of brick, wood and concrete. They provide shade for the pedestrian and the motorist, absorb some of the street noises, and even help purify the air. Trees should be planted not only along pedestrian walkways and sidewalks, but within the parking areas as well. Trees within parking lots help shade the cars and tend to soften the visual effect of the large areas of paving.

Trees should be selected to fit the area in which they are planted. Only certain small trees with compact root systems should be used in street tree plantings. Larger trees should be used within the more open larger spaces downtown.

UNDERGROUND WIRING

It is recommended that a program be initiated that would result in the removal of all overhead wiring in the Monroe central business district. This type program has already been started in Albemarle, Tarboro, and many of the larger North Carolina cities. This program should include the lines in the rear of the buildings and the lines in the parking areas as well as along the main streets. At the present time in many of the sections of the central business district these overhead wires and accompanying poles are most distracting and unpleasant to look at. They detract from the visual environment more than any other single element.

SIGNS

Advertising signs are another of the more dominant visual elements within the Monroe central business district. Although it may be said that all signs serve a specific purpose, they contribute very little to the overall attractiveness of downtown Monroe when the signs are unrelated and poorly designed. This does not mean that all signs should be removed. A city devoid of these directions would indeed lose much of its vitality and efficiency. What it does mean is that we must veer away from too many, too big, too gaudy, too ugly, etc., and put more careful thought into the effective designs and proper placement of necessary signs.

The following six elements should always be considered in the design of any sign:

Location or Placement

Size and Shape

Letter Style

Letter and Background Color

Materials

Relationship to other signs nearby

Since each of these elements is related in concept to all the others, it follows that the violation of any one reduces the overall effectiveness of the whole.

An aesthetically pleasing sign requires a proper relationship between all six elements.

It is recommended that the merchants in Monroe suggest sign regulations to be adopted by the City.

The following criteria should be considered in developing sign regulations:

1. Each establishment should have one name sign only and no major product advertisement.
2. Merchant and property owners within the same block and possibly the entire downtown area should adopt a limited number of letter styles, colors and materials from which individual choices might be made.
3. The total area (square footage) of any attached sign (sign which has its own background) should be limited to three times the lineal feet of the building frontage.
4. When a sign is made up of lettering using the building as the sign background, maximum square footage of the actual space covered by lettering should be limited to one and one-half times the lineal feet of the building frontage.
5. No sign or lettering should project above the building parapet wall or into the pedestrian level.
6. Overhanging signs should be eliminated. Projecting signs should not project more than twelve inches from the face of the building.
7. No sign should be painted or pasted directly upon any wall.

STORE FRONTS

In the past few years, a number of merchants in Downtown Monroe have made improvements to their stores which have improved their appearance. The main problems with these individual unrelated improvements is that in most cases the visual relationship of the improvements to the surrounding buildings has not been considered.

As improvements are made to existing buildings, and as new buildings are constructed, the owners should be encouraged to relate to the adjoining buildings. This would help to unify the appearance of the downtown area. There are methods which can serve to relate all the buildings to one another and to the appearance of the entire block. A unifying element such as a continuous canopy would tend to tie the buildings together visually. In addition, a coordinated color scheme and sign system would give visual harmony to the area. The goal is not to have every building look the same, but to have an overall unity within the entire area.

One of the surest methods of obtaining a satisfactory appearance is to secure the services of an architect to assist in all downtown storefront improvements.

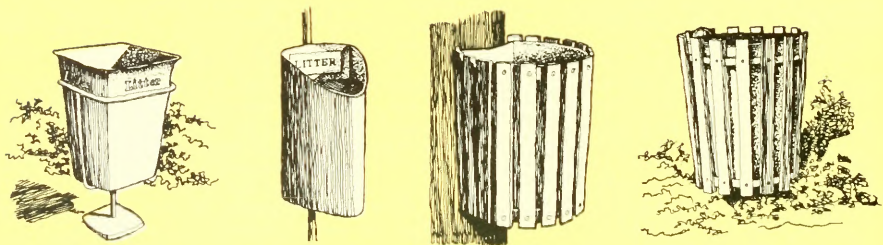
STREET FURNITURE

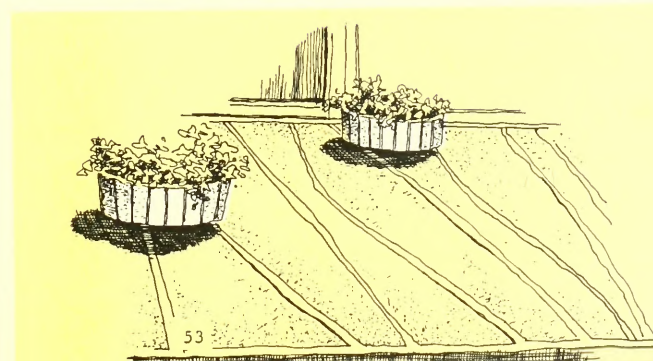
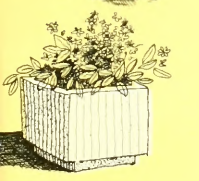
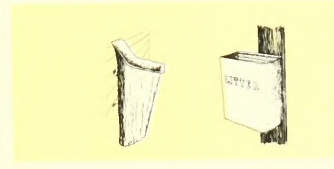
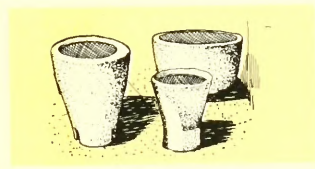
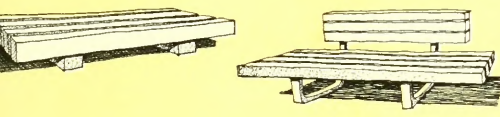
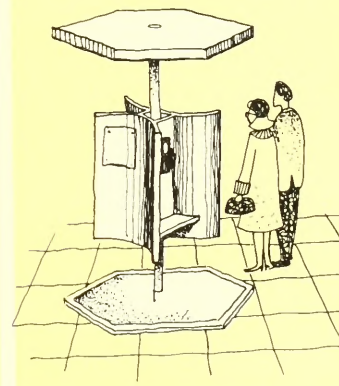
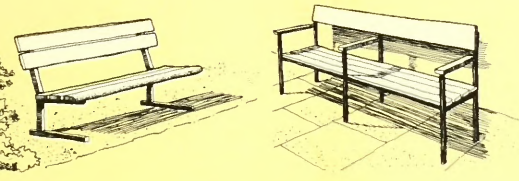
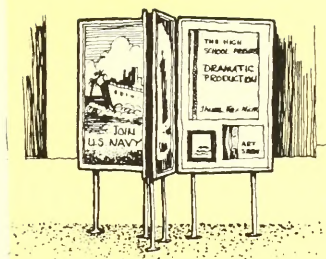
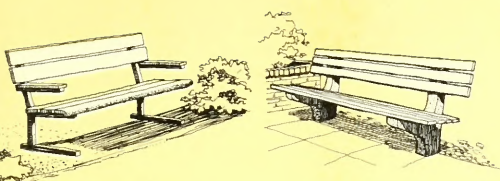
In addition to the buildings in Downtown Monroe, there are various items found on the streets and sidewalks which occupy the spaces between the buildings. For the most part these items could be grouped together and referred to as street furniture: street signs, traffic lights and signs, mail boxes, trash receptacles, monuments, light standards, paving materials, and the like. All of these things are the small scale elements which are constantly used and seen, and are a conspicuous part of the street scene. They may significantly add to or detract from the overall visual impression of the City.

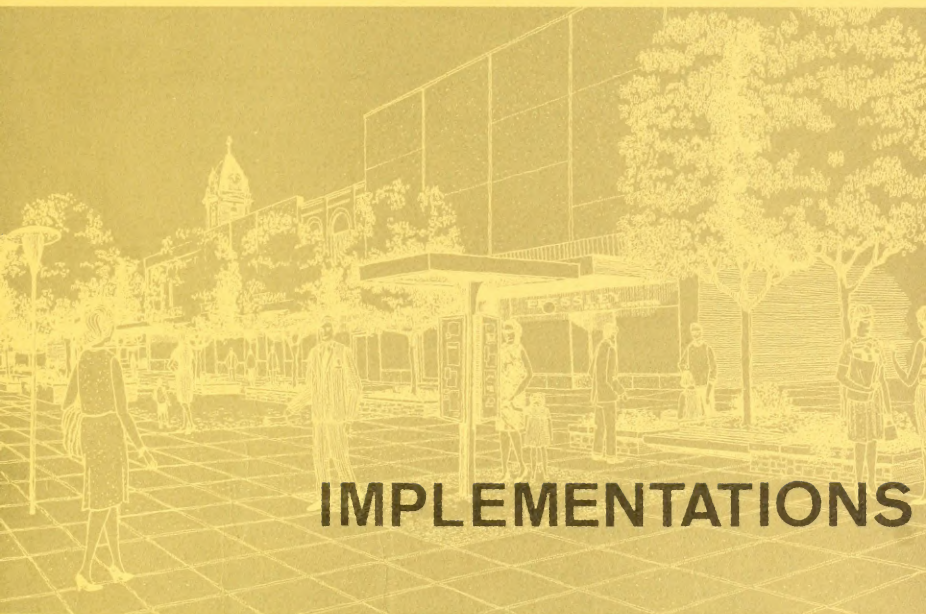
Attention to detail and design of street furniture is as important to the quality of Downtown Monroe as the buildings themselves. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the selection and placement of all these component pieces.

Three general principles should be kept in mind in selecting and placing street furniture:

1. Eliminate everything that is not absolutely necessary and combine as many related items as possible.
2. For each type of street furniture, select one design and one color. Keep the design simple and pleasing to the eye.
3. Strive to find a location which will serve its particular function and will contribute to the attractiveness of the street scene.







IMPLEMENTATIONS

IV. I M P L E M E N T A T I O N

There is no real reason that the majority of changes proposed within the Preliminary Plan cannot be accomplished. But there is reason to believe that the proposals will not be accomplished unless certain basic conditions are fulfilled. First, the City, County, merchants, property owners and civic groups will all have to work together. There will have to be enough people that really want to build the plan so that overall cooperation can be accomplished. Second, there will have to be a continued effort over a long period of time - fifteen to twenty years. Within this overall time period coordinated improvements should be scheduled for completion each year. In this way, people can see things happening and know the overall objectives are being carried out. Third, a central organization is needed to carry the ball and get the plan built.

Although the energy and motivation to rejuvenate the downtown area of Monroe exists among many merchants, land owners and various groups, it is almost impossible to start a complete and overall effort with isolated individuals or groups. What is needed is a permanent central organization to plan, coordinate and administer the carrying out of recommendations, as well as to consider and reconcile the wide diversity of opinion involved in a project of this nature.

MONROE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

It is recommended that a Monroe Downtown Improvement Corporation be founded. This corporation would consist of individuals representing the different functions of Downtown Monroe: merchants, property owners, chamber of commerce, merchant association, city, county, churches, etc.

In general the work of the corporation would consist of the following:

1. To cultivate, develop and maintain the central business district of Monroe as the dominant core and focal point of trade, commerce, industry and culture in its geographical sphere.
2. To enlist the active interest and financial support of individuals, firms and corporations concerned about the development and improvement of the downtown area, particularly, property owners and tenants located within the central business district.

3. To promote and encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment of blighted areas in the central business district, promulgating and devising physical plans and standards for structural rehabilitation and improvement and to prevent the spread of blight.
4. To collaborate and cooperate with public agencies, federal, state and municipal, especially with officials of Monroe and Union County, the Planning Commission and other improvement associations, including the Monroe Chamber of Commerce, whose functions may in any manner relate to any of the objectives hereunder.
5. To acquire by purchase or otherwise hold, deal in and dispose of such real and personal property as may be necessary for the purposes of the corporation.
6. To borrow or raise moneys for any of the purposes of the corporation and, from time to time, without limit as to amount, to draw, make, accept, endorse, execute and issue promissory notes, drafts, bills of exchange, warrants, bonds, debentures and other negotiable or non-negotiable instruments and evidences of indebtedness for any of the purposes of the corporation, and to secure the payment of any pledge, conveyance or assignment in trust of any of the property of the corporation, and to sell or otherwise dispose of such bonds or other obligations of the corporation for its corporate purposes.
7. To make, enter into and perform contracts of every sort and kind with any person, firm, association, corporation, private, public or governmental.
8. To promote conditions conducive to the economic and cultural good and betterment of the entire community with particular reference to the central business district.

The Monroe Downtown Improvement Corporation, as set up in this study, would be very similar to that proposed by the Monroe Chamber of Commerce, and would, if established, accomplish the same purposes.

It should be pointed out that during recent years many thousands of dollars have been spent in Downtown Monroe on uncoordinated improvements. The coordination that could be provided by a Downtown Improvement Corporation would be invaluable, even if no additional expenditures (other than normal improvements) were made.

In addition to this Downtown Corporation there are other organizations and programs that should be used to work in conjunction with the corporation.

PARKING AUTHORITY

As recommended in the Parking and Traffic Study for Downtown Monroe, a parking authority should be formed to undertake the responsibility of carrying out the parking proposals indicated in the Preliminary Plan. Lumberton, North Carolina, and Wilson, North Carolina, have parking authorities that have done a fine job of providing additional parking facilities in the downtown at no cost to the city government.

URBAN RENEWAL

The major portion of the governmental center complex proposed in the Preliminary Plan is located in the area presently being studied by the Monroe Redevelopment Commission. It is hoped that a large portion of land for the complex will be obtained through this urban renewal project. Laurinburg, North Carolina, through a downtown renewal project, has built a new governmental complex and upgraded a large section of the downtown area.

One other area, the southwest section of the central area, should be considered for renewal treatment. This area is shown on the Preliminary Plan as a downtown park and apartment area.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There are a number of programs that provide financial assistance that should be considered as each phase of the Downtown Plan is implemented.

OPEN SPACE PROGRAM OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1965

If urban renewal is not used as a method of obtaining the land for the downtown park, 50 percent grants are available to help purchase and develop such areas under the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965.

URBAN BEAUTIFICATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1965

This program makes available Federal grants to cover up to 50 percent of the amount to be spent on a local beautification program. The Main Street Mall would be eligible for this type of grant if it is a part of Monroe's official beautification program.

HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Improvement of a portion of the downtown loop system of streets might be accomplished with funds obtained through the North Carolina State Highway Commission. Other street improvements will be the responsibility of the City of Monroe.

PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

One of the main points to consider in the implementation of the downtown improvements is that the plan presented in this report is a preliminary plan and is therefore very general in nature and in no instance should be used as the basis for construction. This preliminary plan should be used as a basic guide and framework from which more detailed plans and working drawings can be made. The talents and skills of architects, landscape architects, engineers and then contractors will be required to carry out the plan. Architects should be hired for the design of new buildings and for the design of improvements of the existing buildings. Landscape architects should be hired for the design and preparation of detailed drawings of the malls and outdoor spaces and to make recommendations for the different types of trees and plantings to be used in the area.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The success of a downtown revitalization program in Monroe depends to a great extent upon community cooperation. Every effort should be made to bring all phases of the downtown program to the attention of the general public. Newspapers, radio and television studios all can help in the developing of public support, by keeping the citizens informed about what is taking place, and what is hoped to be accomplished.

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